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AUTHOR Forsythe, Barbara
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if a multidimensional treatment in the study of the content area of social studies would help the average and below average student. The 37 fifth-grade students in this study came from a middle-socioeconomic level of north central New Jersey. The 18 students in the experimental sample received special instruction in specific study skills. These skills included surveying, questioning, reading, reviewing, reciting (SQ3R), organizing and reading skills, skimming, note taking, and reading charts, maps and diagrams. The other group of 19 students formed the control sample. After a period of nine weeks, the experimental sample showed a significant increase in student achievement in the content area of social studies as shown on chapter tests given covering the work. Therefore, teachers should develop and use instructional strategies that stress organizational and reading skills in content area courses. (Twenty-two references and three appendices comparing the results of the experimental and control samples are included.) (Author/AG)

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A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES

BY

BARBARA FORSYTHE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if a multi-dimensional treatment in the study of the content area of social studies would help the average and low average student.

The experimental sample received special instruction in specific study skills. These skills included SQ3R, organizing and reading skills, skimming, note taking and reading charts, maps and diagrams.

After a period of nine weeks, the experimental sample showed a significant increase in student achievement in the content area of social studies as shown on chapter tests given covering the work.

Therefore, teachers should develop and use instructional strategies that stress organizational and reading skills in content area courses.

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Many students in the middle grades read below level (Bradley, Ames, Mitchell 1980) and therefore are unable to successfully master the material in the content areas. Suzanne Wade (1983) found that these students were unable to use their content area textbooks as a source of new information. She also found that in fact there was often a wide range of reading abilities in the same classroom.

Therefore, content area teachers face the complex task of teaching their subject area in a way that makes it accessible to students of different reading abilities. The content area of social studies is an area that relies heavily on reading and seems to be the most vulnerable problem area for the students. The content area of social studies is especially a problem because it relies so heavily on reading and many of the textbooks are too difficult for use with students of average and low average ability in reading without a good deal of assistance from the teacher.

According to the Michigan State Board of Education (1983) there is not one way of teaching that will be effective for all students. Certain types of learning activities may not work well, but the learning experience used should be within the range of possibility for the students involved and appropriate to their interests, needs and capabilities.

Herber's (1970) review of Norfolk, Virginia's program

to provide reading instruction in the content areas found that one of the assumptions needed for the success of their program was based on the idea that the critical variable is the teacher and the program must be sufficiently flexible to allow the individuality of the teacher to be expressed. The program's purpose was to increase the teacher's repertoire of teaching strategies for use in content areas.

Studies carried out by Witt (1962) and Schiller (1963) both showed a significant increase in content material understanding and an increase in a mastery of the use of study skills that were developed.

Therefore, a multidimensional treatment stresssing certain study skills could be benificial to the average and low average student in a social studies class.

HYPOTHESIS

Using a multidimensional treatment in teaching the content area of social studies does not help the average and low average students master academic content more successfully than a control sample not receiving a multidimensional treatment.

DEFINITIONS

multidimensional treatment- organizational and reading skills stressing identifying main idea, skimming,

notetaking and reading charts, maps and diagrams.

PROCEDURES

To accomplish the purpose of this study, it had to be determined whether fifth grade average and below average students would increase their learning of social studies content with the addition of study skills.

The fifth grade students in this study came from a middle-socio-economic level of north-central New Jersey. The classes were already established. One group of 18 students was the experimental sample and the other group of 19 students was the control sample. The cumulatve records were examined for the scores of the most recent California Test of Basic Skills S I area indicating the intelligence of the samples. The results showed that there was no significant difference between both samples in intelligence.

Both samples studied Unit 3, "Desert Regions" from the 1982 edition on The World and Its People by Silver Burdett Company. This unit was comprised of three chapters and there was a test after each of the chapters. The tests were developed by the Silver Burdett Co.

For a period of 9 weeks, the experimental sample was instructed in specific study skills. These skills included SQ3R, organizing and reading skills stressing identifying main ideas, skimming, notetaking and reading charts, maps

and diagrams.

The students were introduced to each chapter of the unit and first surveyed the chapter. They looked at the vocabulary introduced and discussed those they already knew and noted those they needed to define through their reading of the chapter. They then read section headings to hypothesize the topics to be covered in the chapter. They also scanned and discussed pictures, charts, maps and diagrams found in the chapter.

The students were then directed to read individual sections of the chapter silently. The teacher then probed for the main ideas and important facts of the section with the group. Each section was outlined by the students and teacher together and put on the board. The outline was then written by the students and put into their notebooks. The class also did support dittoes that dealt with vocabulary and reading graphs and maps on the chapters. The dittoes were reviewed after they were completed and a discussion of the information followed.

Before each chapter test, the experimental sample discussed again the main ideas of the chapter and participated in an oral review of the chapter by the teacher stressing the main ideas of the chapters. They also were asked to orally formulate essay questions based on their outline that might appear on the test.

The control sample proceeded with the course of study in social studies without any additional instruction in study skills. They were assigned the reading of the sections and answering the questions in each section. No key purpose for reading was set, main and important ideas were not directly discussed, and vocabulary was not reviewed. They did do the support dittoes but did not discuss them.

Both samples were given the same tests on the chapters and the results were compared.

RESULTS

The raw scores of the California Test of Basic Skills S 1 for intelligience of the samples were compared. Table I shows the mean, standard deviation and t for the experimental and control samples and indicates that there was no significant difference between the two samples in intelligence.

Table I

COMPARISON OF EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS: CALIFORNIA TEST OF BASIC SKILLS FOR INTELLIGENCE

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Experimental N= 18	101.00	5.93	.02
Control N= 19	101.16	6.18	

NS df 37

The scores of the two samples on the Chapter 5 test are compared in Table II. The difference between the two means of 12 points was shown by the t value of 6.17 to be significantly below the .01 level.

Table II

STATES AND REGIONS CHAPTER 5 TEST

Chapter 5	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Control	72.11	6.07	6.17
Experimental	84.11	5.77	

35 df Sig. .01

A comparison of the samples' attained mean scores on Chapter 6 indicated only a slight rise in the mean raw scores of the samples but the experimental sample increased its lead by approximately a point. As also shown in Table III, there was a significant difference between the two means as shown by the t value of 6.54.

Table III

STATES AND REGIONS CHAPTER 6 TEST

Chapter 6	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Control	72.53	6.02	6.54
Experimental	85.37	5.94	

35 df Sig. .01

Table IV shows that the experimental sample continued its growth in the mean, an increase of 2 points, while the control sample decreased a point. The almost 17 point difference between the mean of the two samples was found to be signifcantly below the .01 deviation.

Table IV

STATES AND REGIONS CHAPTER 7 TEST

Chapter 7	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Control	71.05	7.22	8.19
Experimental	87.83	5.17	

35 df Sig. .01

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Since there was no significant difference between the experimental sample and the control sample in intelligence, intelligence was not a factor that influenced the results of the experiment.

After the experimental sample was instructed in specific study skills,the statistics showed that there was a significantly greater student achievement in the content area of social studies with a multidimensional skill-centered program. Therefore, study skills taught in social studies proved to be beneficial for the experimental sample for social studies achievement.

Furthermore, the mean for the experimental sample continued to increase after each chapter test indicating that the introduction of study skills continued to aid the students' achievement of social studies' material.

In conclusion, this researcher felt that on the basis of the significant difference in the means for the experimental sample and the control sample in social studies after study skills became part of the program for the experimental sample, study skills should be used and taught in the content area programs. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected because the statistics showed an increase in content area learning for the average and low average student by using a multidimensional treatment.

RELATED RESEARCH

The content area teacher should consider the factors necessary to produce students who can make proper use of effective study techniques, and how programs and instructions can be designed to develop these students. According to Herber (1965), the wise teacher will adapt those suggestions which are applicable to their particular teaching-learning situations, and not adopt any one program in total.

Readence (1980) indicated that content teachers need to be aware that they can help their students to read better without assuming responsibilities usually ascribed to the reading teacher. This occurs when content teachers acquire specific teaching strategies that they can practice and can observe the short-term effects on their students.

The curriculum in all content areas involves student's application of reasoning skills. Herber (1972) suggests that reasoning power can be enhanced by instruction which helps students refine the skills and extend the effectiveness of their application. Such reasoning is related to reading but also occurs during prereading, and postreading activities. Moreover, it occurs also as students respond to nonprint media. Therefore, teachers need to guide students' reasoning so as to enhance its power and effectiveness. This can be done simultaneously

with teaching content, regardless of the media used, and such guidance helps all students across all ability and achievement levels. Students become successful readers when they can readily accommodate their skills to meet the demands of various content areas and levels of sophistication.

Accoridng to Fay (1950), the reading skills related to subject matter achievement differs from one achievement area to another. The reading skills known to be significantly related to success in a given subject matter could well be used as part of a readiness program before formal study is undertaken. They, likewise, could be used as part of diagnostic and remedial programs which attempts to discover and overcome weaknesses found in instruction.

Riley (1979) stated that after the content concepts to be developed are determined, skills or processes need to be selected that facilitate acquisition of those concepts. The processes selected are dependent upon the concepts previously covered. The design of instruction is not totally limited to reading tasks but include other learning tasks as well. Teaching reading in the content areas is instruction that facilitates the learning of content area concepts through careful design and implementation of lessons that focus on selective processes, theoretically based or empiracally verified.

Van Jura (1982) stated that questioning is the most accessible of all methods involved in teaching reading comprehension. Teachers use questions naturally in the classroom, probably more than other tools involved in reading comprehension. Certain study methods (SQ3R) hinge upon the student's ability to formulate good questions, and since students may model their questions after their teachers the way a teacher uses questions takes on more importance. Questions can and should be tools in developing comprehension because research constantly indicates that students retain more about a text when questions are used. Both oral and written questions can help students learn to read to learn.

An important aspect of inquiry-based instruction relates to the types of questions used by the teacher. The Michigan State Board of Education (1983) stated that the effectiveness of questioning is dependent upon the thoroughness of planning and upon the quality and nature of the questions which are asked by the teachers and the students. Questions may promote convergent or divergent thinking. They may also encourage intuitive type thinking which is based on guessing, making hunches, and even jumping to conclusions. To develop inductive thinking, students should have opportunities through questioning, to generalize from a series of specific data. Deductive thinking

involves reasoning from a given set of premises to the specific or from general overall assertations to a logical conclusion.

Hansell (1976) felt if student centered pre-reading activities can convince studetnts that they already understand the content and if understanding precedes word identification then student centered pre-reading activities are a means for teachers to prevent student frustration caused by reading difficulty and to facilitate the development of content goals. Therefore, instead of simply asking students to read a passage, the teacher will 1) ask students to examine the initial information, then 2) ask the key questions or alternative questions. After 3) listing all guesses, the teacher will 4) ask students to read to find if the author included their guesses. The teacher then 5) asks students to evaluate their guesses in relation to the passage, 6) clarify the key concepts, and 7) ask open ended questions that encourage generalization and application.

Keith Thomas (1978) developed the Directed Inquiry Activity to help "direct" students through reading assignments with content materials containing an abundance of factual information and details, much of which should be retained by the reader. The DIA utilizes a framework of conjecture regarding six points of inquiry: Who, What, Where,

Why and How? Students preview the material and are then encouraged to predict responses to these six key questions as preparation for reading the selection. Predictions are treated as purposes for reading and the reading is followed by review and discussion of the various conjectures. Since the teacher plays an active role as facilitator during the DIA, the teacher must be thoroughly familiar with the content and organization of the selection and must have a clear understanding of expectations for student learning.

Both Schneider and Brown (1980) suggests a strategy of organizing textbook-centered instruction. The development of the instructional strategy is to help students make effective use of their textbooks. Essentially such a strategy should incorporate three phases: 1) a pre-reading phase for assesssing skills, diagnosing needs and motivating students for subsequent instruction, 2) the reading phase for guiding students to search out desired information and intellectually interact with and comprehend the message, and 3) the post-reading phase for reinforcing learning, reflection of the meaning and possible use of the newly acquired knowledge.

A textbook may be used as a point of departure for the initiation of activities. Yeager and Edwards (1980) indicated that aside from analyzing charts, graphs, maps and pictures, the textbook may be used as a source book for

for classroom activity. Before beginning to read the chapter, students should examine pictures, cartoons, graphs, charts, and special features found in the chapter. Students can formulate a hypothesis based on knowledge gathered from graphics and special features found in the chapter prior to reading and then support them when reading the chapter. After completing the chapter, students should list the major facts found in the reading. Students can also list the major points located in the summary. The activities undertaken should serve as a stimulus for creative thought, exploration, and investigation.

Dunkeld (1978) did a study to see if sixth, seventh, and eigth grade students could write accurate, comprehensive, well organized notes from short reading assignments in social studies. After the pretests were given,note-taking activities were carried out two or three times a week for 15 to 20 minutes with each of the experimental groups for eigth weeks. The activities to improve note-taking skills were presented in three stages. In stage one, students were placed in small groups, given a passage to read silently and asked to make a list of the 15 to 20 most important words in the passage. Stage two groups compiled its list of important words, they arranged the words into categories which would go together. Stage three students formed categories then made titles for each category, arranged

the titles in order and checked to see that the titles had summarized all of the main ideas of the passage. In this stage they were taught the note-taking format, discussed the uses of note-taking and were shown examples of of completed notes. Even though the results on the post-test did not show a significant difference between the groups, the teachers reported that the experimental activities had been interesting and worthwhile, and that the students had gained from the experiment, especially in the comprehension of the topics studied.

In a study by Schiller (1963), the experimental group used work-study skills systematically and functionally in a social studies program. The skills explored were the following: selection of reference books, location of information through the use of the index, interpretation of the data presented in graphs, charts, and tables. After the work-study skills had been taught, provision was made for the pupils to practice the skills during the process of acquiring information related to the social studies units. Pupils of the experimental group achieved significantly greater mastery of the skills than did pupils of the control group, who made incidental use of the skills. Therefore, the systematic and functional use of work-study skills in the social studies resulted in mastery of the skills and promoted a significant increase in geography

achievement.

Stoodt and Balbo (1979) found that the integration of study skills and content information in a twelfth grade economics class did result in greater mastery of study skills and content materials as measured by an informal inventory. The experimental group received instruction in both economics and study skills. The study skills included: outlining, location information, vocabulary in content, chart interpretation, and study reading. The results of the study showed that the integration of study skills with content resulted in a significant difference between the pretest scores and the posttest scores of the experimental group. The experimental group also scored significantly higher on the posttest that the control group.

Wolf (1978) felt that many students are never taught the necessary reading and study skills also, many students score low on reading and study skills achievement tests because of non-application in subject-matter areas. He developed his study around three major study skills areas a) locational skills, b) organizational skills, and c) reading rate skills. Locational skills pertained to the use of the dictionary, the hands-on using of reference and library materials, direct instruction pertinent to interpreting graphs and maps, and using the parts of the textbooks as information bearing units. Organizational skills focused

on assisting students in applying and remembering information: SQ3R strategy, outlining material, notetaking techniques, and test taking skills. The experimental group was directly taught reading skills in word recognition, comprehension, reading-study skills, interpretative and appreciative skills, and oral reading. Because their was more direct teaching of the skills to the experimental group, they achieved higher results than the control group.

The purpose of Shores' (1943) study was to determine the relationships among ninth-grade pupils between certain study and reading skills and reading comprehension of scientific and historical materials. Shores found that history reading ability was significantly related to the following skills: 1) science comprehension, 2) history vocabulary, 3) general vocabulary, 4) science vocabulary, 5) paragraph comprehension, 6) grasp of the total meaning of a reading passage, 7) organization of ideas, 8) understanding of details, 9) the total score on the measured skills of silent reading comprehension, 10) use of the index, 11) reading of graphs, charts and tables, 12) use of the dictionary, 13) use of basic references and 14) the total score of the measured basic study skills.

A four-step instructional procedure, according to Davey and Porter (1982), can enhance poor readers' comprehension. Its components include instructional assistance

in changing readers' orientations to reading, focusing their attention on meaning, establishing criteria for understanding, and applying appropriate fix-up strategies. The four-step instructional procedure was used successfully with middle-school poor comprehenders in a 6-week training session conducted by the classroom teacher. This procedure was evaluated using an appropriate comparison group of fifth and sixth graders. The students trained in the procedure were more successful in overall posttest comprehension scores in matching their perceived comprehension with their demonstrated comprehension, in generating appropriate summaries after reading and in identifying "idea type" difficulties.

According to Tennyson, Chao, and Youngers (1981), concept learning as a two-fold process: acquisition of a prototype and development of generalization and discrimination skills. Data analyses showed that learning was facilitated for fourth-grade students, by a presentation form that combined expository statements of best examples with interrogatives over presentations that were expository or interrogatory only. At the concrete and identity levels of concept attainment, a prototype was learned wih all three presentation forms, but only with the expostitory-interrogatory form was the acquired prototype maintained on the retention test. At the classification and formal

levels, skills were developed and maintained with the expository-interrogatory presentation form only.

The research indicates that programs that develop study techniques, reasoning power and reading skills related to the content area of social studies can help students master that subject matter. The instruction does not need to be limited to one skills centered program but can be developed using ideas from many programs. Also, the program developed needs to be flexible enough to allow the individuality of the teacher to be expressed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Intelligence

Experimental Sample	Control Sample
109	97
94	97
104	97
92	110
100	110
97	94
97	93
102	109
97	106
102	105
110	100
97	105
109	107
106	96
99	110
109	94
104	100
92	95
	97

Appendix B

Control Sample

Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7
70	72	71
76	70	74
68	67	65
64	68	69
80	82	85
83	81	80
77	75	73
76	76	73
72	75	70
69	68	65
72	77	77
76	77	60
56	59	53
76	79	77
70	69	69
68	66	68
71	70	72
70	68	72
76	79	77

Appendix C

Experimental Sample

Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7
76	78	81
79	79	84
83	86	85
80	82	84
89	91	87
85	84	93
87	89	89
75	74	78
92	93	94
90	91	93
87	85	87
82	85	88
89	92	95
83	80	87
87	89	90
72	77	80
90	93	95
88	89	91